



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Aptech Institute
Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 9-13 July 2023

VO008-C4-R039

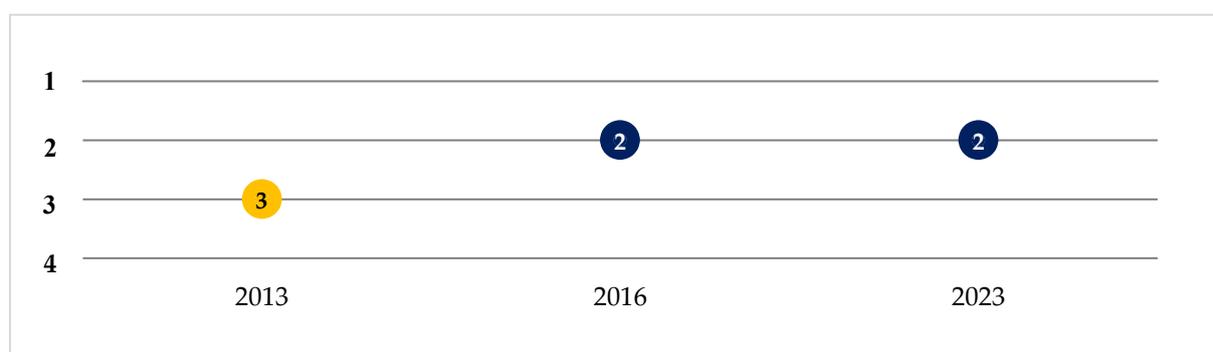
Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over five 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 materials provided by Aptech Institute (Aptech) and collected feedback from learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

This Report summarises the review team's findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Summary of review judgements		
	Aspect	Judgement
Outcomes	Learners' achievement	2
Programmes and processes	Effectiveness of teaching/training and assessment	2
	Quality of courses/programmes	2
	Learners' support and guidance	2
Management and governance	Effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	2
Capacity to improve		2
Overall effectiveness		2

Provider's overall effectiveness throughout the last three reviews



Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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Overall Effectiveness: 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- The overall effectiveness of all Aspects of Aptech Institute (Aptech) is judged as 'Good' including its Capacity to Improve.
- Aptech strategic planning focuses well on enhancing learners' achievement and improving the quality of its provision. The planning is based on effective internal and external self-evaluation processes that are cascaded into a set of focused objectives aligned towards continuous quality improvement. However, a few objectives are not well-defined and/or the indicators are not specific to ensure rigorous monitoring of performance.
- Based on a thorough analysis of local labour market needs and trends, the Institute offers a range of externally accredited and local achievement courses/programmes in the field of Information Technology (IT) which are offered in affiliations with awarding bodies such as Computer Information System Company (CISCO), Digital Marketing Institute (DMI), International Computer Driving License (ICDL) and Microsoft. Additionally, it offers Employability Skills (ES) programmes supported by PeopleCert and City and Guilds.
- The courses/programmes are well-structured, planned, resourced and braced by relevant assessment tools which are properly aligned with the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) following the awarding bodies' guidelines.
- Aptech trainers are certified, qualified and experienced in their field of vocational training. They effectively apply a range of training strategies and purposeful utilisation of various learning resources and materials to promote learning and engage learners productively. However, in a few cases, few learners remain passive, particularly when trainers employ a trainer-centered approach.
- Most learners purposefully develop knowledge and competencies pertinent to their training, reflected in a successful acquisition of relevant technical skills. They progress well and score high proficiency rates; however, a minority of learners score lower proficiency rates, particularly in Excel and English programmes.
- Learners are provided with effective support and guidance throughout the learning journey to overcome their learning difficulties and achieve better outcomes where the majority develop related vocational skills and obtain the qualifications they aim for in a timely manner.
- Although the Institute has an effective mechanism to regularly monitor trainers' performance through internal and external session observations, a number of highlighted recommendations for further improvement are not sufficiently critical or detailed.
- Performance data is analysed at institutional levels and their outcomes

are generally discussed and utilised to trigger improvements.

- Effective quality assurance mechanism is implemented which includes a set of relevant and updated policies, procedures and a suitable arrangement

of moderation and verification processes that are consistently implemented. However, processes do not cover all aspects of the learning and training provision.

Capacity to Improve: 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- Aptech maintained its previous Overall Effectiveness as 'Good'. In addition, the Institute has effectively addressed the key recommendations stated in the last BQA review report, such as improving the quality of training methods.
- Aptech effectively implement and monitors a well-structured three-year strategic plan that has been formulated based on the outcomes of purposeful internal and external self-evaluation processes. The management team swiftly developed a 'Contingency Plan' in response to the emerging circumstances and associated risks, and the Institute's operations are adapted to ensure business continuity and sustainability.
- Aptech maintains a fit-for-purpose organisational structure that suits the nature of its operations and fulfils the requirements, further supported by qualified and experienced staff and trainers who are effectively inducted, deployed and developed.
- The institute has clear initiative towards offering a new range of courses/programmes such as Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) Certification, to shift from local courses to international certification by 2024, focusing on Train and Place / On Job Training (OJT) programs for Bahraini Job Seekers and have improved its affiliations with CompTIA for Security courses.
- The Institute continues to maintain effective links with international IT awarding bodies, and based on market demands and trends, Aptech has expanded the range of externally accredited courses/programmes to include English and ES programmes with different levels.
- The number of enrolments has varied since 2019 with reasonable repeat business, though enrolments in 2020 were lower than in the year 2021, the numbers continue to improve.

The Provider's Key Strengths

- successful progression towards achieving the qualifications that are aimed for by learners.
- Effective deployment of trainers' theoretical and practical experience to enrich learning.
- well-structured courses/programmes that are based on a careful understanding of local market and industry trends.
- effective support provided to learners throughout their learning journey to help them achieve better outcomes.

Recommendations

In order to improve its provision, Aptech should:

- further improve learners' mastering of knowledge and skills.
- enhance the training methodologies to effectively engage less interactive learners throughout the sessions.
- strengthen the leadership and management by
 - ensuring the comprehensiveness, rigorousness, and consistency of the implementation of the quality assurance system, particularly the verification and moderation processes.
 - further improvement of the strategic planning and monitoring of its progress.

Learners' Achievement: 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- Most learners gain and develop knowledge and vocational skills, reflected in a successful acquisition of technical abilities relevant to their chosen courses/programmes. Relevantly, high proficiency rates are attained, with a minority of learners scoring lower proficiency rates, particularly in Excel and English programmes.
- According to the analysis of Learners' Performance Data (LPD) submitted by the Institute, the majority of learners are enrolled in the local achievement courses representing (57%) of the total enrollment; of which (63%) are in the Information Technology courses while a significant minority of total enrolment (38%), are externally accredited courses/programmes, with (78%) of enrolment being in the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) foundation course. In addition, enrollment in a few courses (5%), are remedial, and externally accredited courses conducted without an examination setting.
- In the externally accredited courses/programmes, half of the learners' attainment levels are relevantly high in comparison to the awarding bodies' passing criteria, with a few learners scoring borderline grades, in the Certified Digital Marketing Professional certificate. The externally accredited courses/programmes represent a significant minority of the total enrolment (38%).
- Almost all learners in the externally accredited courses/programmes achieve the qualifications they aim for in a timely manner, with a few learners achieving the aimed qualifications after several attempts, particularly in the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) and ICDL courses/programmes, while in the local achievement courses/programmes, all learners successfully achieve the qualifications they aim for.
- Aptech has a fit-for-purpose assessment process to measure learners' achievement by utilising a variety of formative and summative assessment tools that are fit for purpose for the course/programme type and suitably verified and linked to the objectives/ILOs. It is worth mentioning that a few of the summative assessments do not always cover the ILOs.
- Considering the level and the complexity of the assessments, most learners progress well relevant to their prior attainment, Aptech utilises a fit-for-purpose mechanism to measure learners' progress. Considering the level and the complexity of the assessments, most learners progress well relevant to their prior attainment in addition to a few of them who are progressing well over levels.
- Most learners show high levels of commitment and positive attitude towards their learning experience which is evident through their regular attendance and in-class active

interaction. Aptech maintains accurate records about learners' attendance and punctuality, yet there are a few cases of late attendees as observed during the lesson observations.

- Most learners are able to work well independently and collaboratively and show self-confidence while completing

their in-class practical activities and assignments; yet, in the group work, there are a few group members who tend to remain passive, and a minority of them require more trainer's assistance to be able to execute tasks independently.

Areas for improvement

- learners' mastering of skills and acquisition of knowledge, particularly in local achievement IT and English courses.

Effectiveness of Teaching/Training and Assessment: 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- Aptech trainers are qualified, knowledgeable, and experienced in their field of vocational training that is well reflected in their clear explanations, enriched with useful workplace-related examples and precise responses to learners' enquiries.
- In most of the observed sessions, trainers effectively adopt a range of effective training strategies that succeed in engaging most learners throughout the learning process. These include lecturing, discussions, group work and practical hands-on activities in which learners illustrate real-life cases and develop their technical skills effectively. However, in a few cases, few learners remain passive and are not encouraged enough to participate, particularly when trainers apply a trainer-centered approach.
- Trainers effectively utilise the available learning resources, to enable purposeful learning and smooth training delivery.
- The used formative and summative assessment tools and methods include, for instance, various questioning techniques and relevant practical activities that vary in level and complexity and that are mostly customised to the nature of the course and learners' interests and experience, in addition to pre-and post-tests to effectively evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of courses/programmes objectives/ILOs in a timely manner. However, in a minority of sessions, trainers insufficiently assess learners' individual attainment.
- The assessment in the Employability Skills programme is subjected to systematic verification and moderation

processes as per the awarding body's regulations, with a fit-for-purpose process implemented in the other courses/programmes.

- Most trainers effectively plan and deliver the training in accordance with well-structured session plans. However, in a few sessions, time management during class activities is an issue.
- Lesson planning is effectively informed by learners' profiles and assessment outcomes allowing for well-managed and progressive session delivery aligned with the specified objectives/ILOs.
- Learners' individual needs are effectively accommodated by the majority of trainers. Such accommodation is reflected through providing further elaborations and explanations and motivating them to link theoretical concepts taught with real-life situations, in addition to

supporting and encouraging learners to participate.

- Most trainers appropriately utilise different approaches, and learning activities directed to stimulate learners' self-learning and critical thinking. Also, online search engines to perform tasks further challenging questions, and practical cases evaluation are used to help learners develop their knowledge and skills.
- Aptech maintains and regularly updates accurate learners' performance records including their attendance and punctuality.
- Trainers constantly provide constructive verbal feedback to learners that essentially contributes to learners' improvement and development throughout the course/programme. Nevertheless, the provided written feedback on learners' work, is insufficient to indicate learners' areas for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- effectiveness of training strategies, to further challenge and engage learners.
- rigorousness of assessment tools and methods.

Quality of Course/Programmes: 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- Aptech offers a range of IT externally accredited courses/programmes in association with different international awarding bodies. The offerings also include a range of local achievement courses in English, leadership,

management and human resources development courses that meet learners and stakeholders' needs.

- The courses/programmes on offer are based on a careful understanding of the professional standards and skills

requirements of learners and the local labour market. A formal mechanism is systematically implemented through useful surveys and regular learners and stakeholders' collected feedback. Additionally, Aptech relies on management experience of the local labour market.

- The courses/programmes are well-planned and structured with detailed course outlines that indicate the objectives/ILOs, teaching and assessment methods and pathways for learning and progression, yet progression routes in a few courses are not always mentioned. The externally accredited courses/programmes' structure, syllabus and assessments are in line with the awarding bodies' stipulations.
- Aptech implements suitable policies to design, verify, approve, periodically review, and update courses/programmes including assessments. The institute follows the awarding body's specifications for the external courses/programmes, and Aptech Worldwide for the local achievement courses/programmes. However, the internal summative assessment is not always well-mapped to the courses' ILOs, and the internal verification process is not consistently implemented.

- Courses/programmes are well-resourced with a range of suitable learning resources and materials. As for the externally accredited courses/programmes, authentic resources such as technology software, books, and supplementary materials are used. Moreover, During the emerging circumstances, in accordance with licensing and awarding bodies' directives, Aptech efficiently adjusted its mode of delivery to approved online platforms and effectively supported training and learning needs by utilising different applications, well-equipped training rooms, a laboratory and an e-library.
- The Institute has a suitable access and entry requirements procedure that is well deployed for local courses and externally accredited courses/programmes. Initial pre-admission tests with clear criteria and rubrics are utilised to ascertain learners' eligibility to access their intended course/programme as mandated by the licensing, funding and awarding bodies. Notwithstanding the above, English courses' diagnostic tests are not sufficiently detailed.

Areas for improvement

- internal verification process and alignment of the internal assessment to courses' ILOs.

Learners' Support and Guidance: 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- Aptech implements effective mechanism to support and guide learners throughout the learning process to overcome their learning difficulties and achieve better outcomes. Trainers and administrative staff members have a close rapport with learners; they interact with learners' needs actively and provide the required support during the learning process and in a few cases after the course/programme completion.
- Aptech has sufficiently detailed policies and procedures related to learners' support and guidance including registration and admission, and complaints and appeals policies. Although the Institute promptly responds to learners' complaints, the documentation of such cases is not always sufficient.
- The Institute has a clear mechanism to identify at-risk learners to ensure the consistent implementation of the support practices. Aptech provides continuous and relevant technical support and follow-up to help learners adapt to the changes in the mode of delivery and platforms used, in addition to flexible arrangements for courses/programmes delivery to address their needs and requirements.
- Learners have access to well-informed advice and guidance about courses/programmes through different channels including 'Learners pack', active social media accounts, a useful e-library that includes relevant learning resources and references and the Institute's updated website. Prior to the commencement of a course/programme, an effective induction session is provided to learners to familiarise them with aspects related to their learning and enable them to settle quickly and confidently.
- Aptech enriches courses/programmes with a relevant range of extra-curricular activities to enhance learners' technical skills and knowledge, through free webinars, external learning resources recommended links, mentorship, and guest speakers' motivational sessions. Learners are encouraged to use the e-library and the e-learning platforms of the awarding bodies to enrich their learning experience and develop their skills.
- The Institute maintains effective communications with relevant stakeholders who are regularly informed about learners' performance, including their attendance throughout the course/programme. Upon course/programme completion, a fit-for-purpose "*Trainee Performance Report & Feedback to Learner Report*" is shared with stakeholders which includes attendance and overall performance. However, the comments on the learner's performance are not always individualised or critical.
- Aptech has useful and relevant policies and procedures to identify and support learners with special needs; fit-for-

purpose arrangements are considered in the course venue and the Institute premises. However, no cases of

learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities have been identified yet.

Areas for improvement

- the quality of learners' performance report shared with the stakeholders.

Effectiveness of Leadership, Management and Governance: 'Good'

Judgement justifications

- Aptech management has a clear and effective strategic direction that focuses on enhancing learners' achievement and improving the quality of the provision. A well-structured three-year strategic plan has been formulated using the outcomes of purposeful internal and external self-evaluation processes.
- The strategic plan is underpinned by a set of relevant and challenging objectives aligned towards continuous improvement. The Monitoring Plan is effective and detailed which sets out clear actions to facilitate progress monitoring over time. However, a few objectives and/or actions are not well-defined, and the indicators are not specific or measurable to ensure rigorous monitoring of performance.
- The developed Contingency Plan in response to the emerging circumstances, is swiftly deployed by a proper understanding of the associated risks. Aptech management has taken a number of actions and adapted its operations to ensure training continuity and long-term business sustainability.
- The Institute has adopted an effective mechanism to accurately maintain, verify and monitor learners' performance data for all the conducted courses/programmes. This data is analysed on institutional levels in which outcomes are generally discussed at various relevant management and staff meetings, and properly utilised to inform improvement decision-making.
- The mechanism utilised to ensure the quality of training is effective and suitable for the chosen mode of delivery. Trainers' performance is well-monitored through periodic internal and external sessions observations. Although the completed forms highlighted positive aspects and recommendations for further improvement when required, a number of them are not sufficiently critical or detailed.
- Staff performance is regularly and effectively monitored to identify staff strengths and provide recommendations for further improvement when needed. A relevant range of training and development opportunities in addition to the needed technical support are provided to trainers and staff based on the outcomes of performance monitoring.

- Aptech’s organisational structure is fit-for-purpose that suits the nature of the operations and fulfils the requirements of the provision. Qualified and experienced staff and local and international trainers are effectively deployed and inducted.
- Aptech has effective quality assurance arrangements underpinned by a set of relevant and updated policies and procedures and supported with useful forms where the majority are effectively implemented. However, a few pieces of information in a number of policies are insufficiently detailed.
- A clear mechanism is in place to monitor the effective and consistent implementation of the internal quality assurance system including the moderation and verification processes that are consistently implemented; however, these mechanisms are not covering all aspects of learning and training provision.
- A detailed policy supported by essential measures and relevant procedures is in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of learners and staff. The learning environment is suitable; the premises and facilities are healthy and free from hazards.
- A formal mechanism is in place for collecting and analysing stakeholders’ feedback where the outcomes are effectively utilised to inform decision-making and guide improvement actions. The Institute has well-established links with local community organisations as well as effective partnerships with a number of international partners and awarding bodies.

Areas for improvement

- the operational actions and success measures to be clearly specified to facilitate the monitoring of progress towards achieving the strategic objectives.
- rigour and full implementation of the internal quality assurance system to cover all aspects of the provision, particularly the monitoring of trainers’ performance and verification and moderation processes.

Appendix: Provider Information

Provider Name (English)	Aptech Institute W.L.L					
Provider Name (Arabic)	معهد أبتك ذ.م.م					
Licensing Body	Ministry of Labour					
Year of Establishment	1993					
Age Range of Learners	17 and above					
Number of Learners	Male	743	Female	504	Total	1247
Learning Areas	Externally Accredited		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Information Technology (IT)</u> Awarding Body: International Computer Driving License (ICDL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICDL Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) ITIL foundation Computer Information System Company (CISCO): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cisco Certified Network Associate CCNA Digital Marketing Institute (DMI): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Certified Digital Marketing professional. PeopleCert: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prince 2 foundation - Prince 2 Practitioner. • <u>Leadership, Management</u> City and Guilds: 			

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry level certificate in Employability Skills (Entry 2) - Entry level certificate in Employability Skills (Entry 3) - Level 1 certificate in Employability Skills.
	Local Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Technology (IT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Microsoft Excel 2013 Advanced - Microsoft Excel 2013 Basic - Microsoft Excel 2013 Intermediate - Microsoft Excel 2016 Basic - Microsoft Excel 2016 Intermediate • Languages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beginner English - Spoken English Intermediate
	Local Attendance	N/A
Available Learning Platform(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aptech Online Assessment • Cisco Netacad • DMI Portal • ICDL Portal • Microsoft Learn 	
Institution's Listing Status	<p style="text-align: center;">Listed on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Listing ID: IL22-02 June 2023</p>	
List of Qualifications placed on/aligned to the NQF	None	