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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Bahrain Institute

East Riffa

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 21 - 23 June 2010

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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

Bahrain Institute was founded in 1970 and licensed by the Ministry of Education as one of the first private educational institutes in the Kingdom. The institute operates from one centre in Riffa and offers non-accredited courses in operating systems and software applications including Windows, Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Access, Outlook, FrontPage, Photoshop and Flash. The institute also offers English Language courses. Courses last 15 hours and take place over five weeks. During the first half of 2010, 316 students were enrolled, 60% of them on to IT courses. Students range in age from 12 to 35. Most come from schools and some from local businesses.

The centre, based in Riffa, is managed by a chief executive officer. The staff team comprises a registration officer, secretarial support and one full-time teacher. Several more teachers work part-time at the institute.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days by a team of five reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed teaching sessions, analysed data about the qualifications students achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with staff, students, parents and employers.

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 4: Below satisfactory

Overall, Bahrain Institute's provision is below satisfactory. The range of courses on offer and the support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and the leadership and management of the institute are below satisfactory, however. There was insufficient evidence available to make a judgement on students' achievements.

Most students have the basic skills to progress well in the courses they undertake. They enjoy their classes and develop useful knowledge and skills that help them to perform better at school or in the workplace. The institute does not sufficiently measure whether students have achieved their objectives or made appropriate progress. The methods used to assess progress and achievement are insufficiently rigorous. Courses lead only to an attendance certificate, which does not show how well the student has performed.

Most teachers recap previous work effectively and make useful links between sessions. Most lessons are too teacher-led, however, and students' participation and engagement is minimal. The range of activities used to measure students' understanding is insufficient, and teachers do not provide students with enough written feedback on their work. The placement test used is not well structured and does not ensure that students are put on the right course. Some teachers are not suitably qualified and lack experience in the area they teach; the process for recruiting these teachers is not rigorous enough.

The range of courses meets students' needs and aspirations, but all the provision is non-accredited. English courses are offered at entry level with satisfactory progression routes. Information Technology (IT) courses come at one level only, however, leaving students no opportunity to develop their skills.

Staff are approachable and supportive. The institute offers a clean and generally safe learning environment. Although basic health and safety requirements are adhered to, the institute does not have a written health and safety policy. Health and safety measures are not explained to students when they join their course.

Arrangements to monitor and measure students' achievement are inadequate. Data on students' performance are not collected or monitored, and clear performance targets are not set. A well designed lesson observation scheme has recently been introduced, and two teachers have been observed, but only verbal feedback was provided afterwards. The

institute does not have a system to collect feedback from parents. Most communication with parents is verbal and their comments are not logged or used to plan improvements.

Capacity to improve

Grade 4: Below satisfactory

The institute's management team changed in May 2010. Since then, a few improvements have been initiated, including changes to the English language curriculum, improvements to course materials, and the installation of a new management information system. Contact has been made with a regional accrediting body, with a view to offering the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) course. These changes have been made piecemeal, however, rather than as part of a detailed, considered strategic plan. They have not yet had a demonstrable impact on the quality of the provision.

Bahrain Institute lacks information critical to improvement. The data currently kept is basic, and does not indicate how well students have performed, or which courses fare well or badly. Feedback from stakeholders is not collected consistently enough; when it is collected it is not used to identify areas in which improvements are needed. The institute depends largely on part-time teachers, some of whom are not properly qualified or experienced. The newly implemented lesson observation system is neither rigorous nor well established enough to measure the quality of teaching or help teachers with their professional development.

Enrolments rose by around 20% during 2009, reaching nearly 1500, but dropped sharply again in the first half of 2010, during which only 316 students joined Bahrain Institute's courses. This decline is despite the fact that the range of courses on offer has increased during 2010, rising from 14 available programmes to 23.

The institute's self-evaluation form (SEF) is neither comprehensive nor self-critical. It is not based on clear evidence, fails to recognise the areas in which improvement is needed, and proposes grades which are too generous in every case.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	**Grade 4: Below satisfactory**
Capacity to Improve	Grade 4: Below satisfactory
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Insufficient evidence to grade
How effective is teaching?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- None.

Areas for improvement

- **Monitoring of students' achievements and progress**. This is insufficiently rigorous or effective in measuring students' progress in gaining the requisite knowledge and skills. The only assessment of students' achievement which takes place occurs at the end of courses when students take a final examination, the results of which are only now being collated and analysed.

- **Pre- and post- assessment.** Pre-assessment tests are ineffective in measuring students' prior learning and achievements**.** There is no initial assessment on IT courses and although initial assessment takes place for English courses, the tests used are unsuitable. As a consequence, there are no secure measures in place to ensure that students' varying needs are recognised and accommodated. The final course examination undertaken by students is poorly structured and unreliable and there is an over-reliance on attendance certificates as a measure of success.

- **Feedback on students' work.** Feedback provided to students is not constructive and is insufficiently detailed to help them improve. Examinations are not always marked carefully enough with wrong answers frequently marked as correct.

- **Teachers' qualifications and experience.** Some part-time teachers are neither suitably qualified nor sufficiently experienced in their field to provide an appropriate and rewarding learning experience for students.

- **Progression routes on IT courses.** There are no progression routes on IT courses, and as a consequence students have little opportunity to apply and develop further their IT skills.

- **Strategies to measure the quality of teaching.** Measures to monitor and improve the quality of teaching are inadequate. Although the institute has recently introduced a lesson observation scheme, including the use of an appropriate lesson checklist, teachers do not receive sufficient or informative feedback on their performance. Furthermore, there is no proper system in place to ensure the actions are taken to address identified weaknesses.

- **Collection and use of parents' and students' feedback.** Feedback gathered from parents and students after each course is insufficient. Parental feedback is mostly verbal and lacking in detail. Whilst students complete an appropriate course evaluation form, outcomes are not aggregated, analysed or acted upon.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, Bahrain Institute should:

- establish a system to measure students' achievements and monitor their progress

- introduce rigorous initial assessment, and use the outcomes effectively

- ensure that students are provided with constructive and helpful feedback

- recruit teachers with sufficient, appropriate qualifications and experience

- introduce IT courses which offer suitable progression routes

- monitor the quality of teaching more thoroughly

- systematically collect, analyse and use parents' and students' views.