



# **Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report**

**Gulf Aviation Academy (GAA)  
Muharraq  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 27-30 January 2014**

VO102-C2-R074

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## The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

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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 strength in the provision.

## Introduction

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### Description of the provision

Gulf Aviation Academy (GAA) was established in July 2009 as a key component of Bahrain's aviation sector and is solely owned by Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company, the investment arm of the Kingdom of Bahrain's Government. GAA is licenced by the Ministry of Labour (MOL), and is an approved centre of the Bahrain Civil Aviation Affairs (BCAA) and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) under European Union (EU) regulations as a Type Rating Training Organization (TRTO). The Academy focuses on initial type rating and subsequent recurrent training of pilots under the provisions of Air Navigation Technical Regulation–Flight Crew Licensing (ANTR FCL) and ANTR–Synthetic Training Device (ANTR STD) and Cabin Crew Training Organisation (CCTO) under ANTRs. GAA is also an approved centre for offering technical training under ANTR Part 147.

Currently, the Academy offers courses in the areas of pilot training, cabin crew training and engineering training. The courses offered fall into two categories: externally accredited courses approved by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and GAA accredited courses with international recognitions. The Duration of the courses offered are between 16 to 210 hours. In addition, GAA works as an agent for some aviation institutes, where it facilitates for learners' registration on courses and programmes offered by a third party. The responsibilities for designing, delivering, awarding and quality assuring of these courses and programmes are solely on the third party.

Most GAA's learners are employed adults aged 19 and above. The total number of learners enrolled in 2011 was 1059, 1355 learners were enrolled in 2012, 1467 learners in 2013 and 244 learners in January of 2014. Almost all learners are professional employees within the aviation sector. GAA is based in Muharraq close to Bahrain International Airport.

The Academy employs around 65 full-time senior management and administrative staff and 30 trainers of different nationalities, 15 of which are Bahrainis. GAA's management team comprises an acting chief executive officer (ACEO), a quality assurance manager, a pilot training manager, a cabin crew training manager, an engineering training manager, a commercial lawyer, a human resources manager, a customer services manager, an IT manager, a business development manager, a facilities and building manager, a simulator and equipment manager and financial controller. GAA's ACEO reports to the Board of Directors, Which consist of five members and chaired by an experienced captain in aviation.

## **Scope of the review**

This review was conducted over four days, by a team of six reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed lessons, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieved, examined available learners' written and other work, studied documents and other materials provided by the provider and met with staff, trainers and learners and got feedback from employers.

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

## Table of review judgements awarded

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<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners and stakeholders' needs?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
<b>Learners' Achievement</b>	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
<b>Quality of Provision</b>	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade: 1 Outstanding

## Review judgements

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### Overall effectiveness

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

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

The overall effectiveness of GAA is outstanding, as are all the other aspects of the provision, with almost all the learners competently developing outstanding vocational skills and knowledge in the different sectors of the aviation field, obtaining the qualification they aim for and successfully achieving the course objectives. This is the result of using effective training strategies and activities to engage and motivate learners through sessions delivered by GAA's well-qualified, experienced and licenced trainers in the field of aviation, in addition to the highly useful support received from the management, staff members and trainers. Learners' progress is assessed effectively through different formative assessment methods and records are well maintained. The institute delivers courses that are highly responsive to stakeholders' and learners' specific career needs and aspirations. A very wide range of externally and internally accredited courses with different levels is offered. These are well planned, structured and effectively resourced. GAA is highly flexible in delivering courses that suit the needs of different stakeholders. It maintains highly effective communication channels with its stakeholders before the course to ensure that courses offered meet their specific requirements. GAA has an inspiring environment and outstanding learning resources utilised to support the offered courses effectively.

The Academy's management has developed effective strategic and annual business plans with specific KPIs that are focused on improving the quality of the training offered and fulfilling client's specific needs. The management structure is effective in meeting GAA's objectives. Qualified and experienced trainers are recruited, well inducted and effectively deployed and the quality of training is assured through a useful session's observation scheme. The institute has clear requirements that prospective learners need to meet before being admitted to a given course, which is consistently implemented. Good arrangements are in place for collecting, analysing and acting upon the views of the learners and their employers. The health and safety policy and procedures are effective in securing a safe and healthy environment for learners and staff.

GAA's capacity to improve is outstanding. The management team is keen on developing the Academy through a set of clear and relevant plans. The institute has very effective internal quality assurance policies and a procedure used to ensure the quality of the provision and is working on introducing more monitoring, verifications systems to ensure the rigour of the

assessment tools used its marking and grading system. Coupled with the highly effective human and physical resources, these enable GAA to undertake further improvement, maintain significant relationship with stakeholders and actively address concerns raised by the learners and employers. The institute has increased the range of its internal and external accredited course offerings by adding other courses such as security course for both civil and military in coordination of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and a course on air traffic control training in coordination with EASA. The Academy has an inspiring environment, and outstanding and effective learning resources utilised to support the programmes offered and it has worked on improving the learning resources by acquiring two additional aircraft simulators. The institute maintained a good learner's enrolment and a high rate of repeat business over the last three years with the major client.

## **Learners' achievement**

### **How well do learners achieve?**

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

Overall, learners' achievement at GAA is outstanding. Almost all learners are obtaining the qualification they aim for competently, and are achieving the course objectives successfully. Moreover, learners develop relevant vocational skills and knowledge in the different sectors of the aviation field and are confidently applying the gained skills at their workplace.

For the past four years, learners' success rate on the engineering courses is extremely high at 100%, and in the cabin crew courses success rate is also very high ranging from 98% to 100%. Moreover, for the past two years, learners' success rate on the flight operations courses is almost 100%. Learners develop the required international standards of the relevant vocational skills in the field of flight operations, cabin crew and engineering. This strongly qualifies them to gain employability-required skills relevant to the aviation industry. Moreover, learners are able to proceed successfully to more advanced levels and gain extra knowledge and skills. For example, from the observed simulation sessions in the flight operation courses, learners are effectively proceeding to the next advance level of knowledge and skills with ease and high level of confident.

GAA implements effective assessment processes for all courses on offer. Generally, progress during each session is measured using robust criteria, and specific skills needed within a course are evaluated based on predefined criteria. For example, in the case of flight operations courses, learners' daily performance on Maintenance and Flight Training Device (MFTD), Full Flight Simulators (FFS), Licence Skills Test (LST), and Aircraft Training Detail are assessed and level of attainment is recorded using the 'Training Progress Form', which

stipulates rigorous criteria. Learners' proficiency and performance focused on Crew Resource Management (CRM), automation management, manual flying skills, procedural knowledge and application, and systems knowledge and application are assessed using a four-grade scheme using a clear rubric stating when each grade is awarded.

From the observed sessions, provided samples of learners' work and records of learners' achievement, almost all learners perform well and show a high level of confidence and independency. In addition, learners demonstrate a high ability to work both independently and collaboratively. For example, in the first aid session for cabin crews, learners were able to apply the required emergency practices to deal with unconscious passengers confidently. The other cited example was during the simulation sessions of most of the flight operations, where learners were able to communicate effectively, define the problems clearly and agree on the actions needed to address the problem while dealing with the automated flight system effectively. Moreover, from all the sessions observed, almost all learners are highly self-motivated and enjoy their learning experience, especially the practical hands-on exercises. During the observed sessions, almost all learners were proactive in asking critical questions that enable them to improve further their understanding and solve problems. Learners think creatively, are keen to show their understanding and share their knowledge and their work experiences with other learners and trainers confidently.

GAA has clear attendance policy and procedure, which are implemented effectively. The Academy keeps records of attendance and punctuality for all courses. According to all the sessions observed and the attendance and punctuality records kept by the institute, learners attend regularly and punctually and complete the total required hours for each course.

## **The quality of provision**

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

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

GAA trainers are licensed to train in the field of aviation as civil pilots' trainers, flight attendant trainers, engineers and first aider's trainers. They are highly qualified with relevant theoretical and practical command of their field and are approved as trainers in specific field of aviation by the BCAA, EASA, and the Civil Aviation Authority International (CAAi). In addition, pilot trainers act as mentors to learners to deliver standardised content, assess learners and encourage them to think critically and taking immediate decisions. From the observed sessions, trainers utilise their vast experience in real life experiences, align their delivery to different airline procedures, and provide recurrent learners with updated skills and knowledge.

Generally, trainers share the course objectives and expected outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills with learners. They utilise a range of effective training methods such as direct questioning, real life examples and practical demonstrations with effective continuous verbal and written feedback provided to learners. This is complemented by targeted activities that engage, motivate and challenge learners effectively during both the theoretical sessions and the practical demonstrations. Most of the trainers use a mixture of trainers' guided and learners-centred approach, however, a few trainers do not provide learners with sufficient time to reflect on and respond to the questions raised. Learners' understanding is regularly checked during the theoretical and practical training sessions through formative assessments. On all courses, learners are expected to master the set skills and gain up-to-standard knowledge in order to be able to renew their licenses. Depending on the competency expected to be gained at the end of a course, trainers customise the assessment methods used, which stipulate clear pre-defined assessment criteria. Moreover, in case of the customised courses, assessment is aligned to the airline's unique manual and standards.

Most GAA's trainers enable learners to further their understanding and reflect critically on what they learn. Learning is stimulated through exposing learners to emergency scenarios and assessing their responses. This is evident in the pilot training, CRM and the first aid courses. Learners are encouraged also to reflect on the recent flight incidents they have experienced. Trainers use a range of quality real life learning resources that reflect current industrial and commercial standards to promote focused learning. The learning resources used comprises a range of interactive clips, videos and related airline manuals. The institute has 39 classrooms equipped with smart boards and high-speed internet connection. These are complemented with a full-flight approved A320 simulators with visual systems and an ergonomic trainers working area, complete with a forward manoeuvrable workstation and an optimal view of both the learner and the training area, an A330/A340, Embraer 170/190 and an Airbus Competence Training (ACT) classroom that is used for the theoretical and practical training. In addition, the institute has an Airbus Maintenance Flight Training Device (MFTD) & Pilot Transition Trainers (PTT) that can be used for computer-based training, procedure tutorial and free play. For cabin training, in-flight cabin service mock-up is available for the A320, A330, A340 and B767 for both Business and Economy classes and include on board working galleys, carts and equipment. Also, for Cabin Emergency Evacuation Training (CEET) to demonstrate evacuation procedures and fire drills, a Water Training Facility are used for ditching and wet drill training activities with safety gears including life vests and slide rafts.

GAA maintains standardised and regularly updated records of learners' achievements that included examination results, licenses and progress as per EASA and other regulatory authorities' requirements. All learners are recurrent learners is aviation, being pilots, cabin crew or engineers.

Session planning is informed in advance by the stakeholders' unique needs; such as when catering for different airline needs. These plans also meet the awarding bodies' requirements. Moreover, sessions are flexible in meeting the needs of a single or a group of learners of the same airline. Almost all sessions are structured well with clear set of learning outcomes and assessment measures. From the observed sessions, these are timely managed; allowing sufficient time for the assigned activities to be conducted by the learners and for reflective summary statements to be communicated by the trainer.

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

### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

GAA is highly responsive to the market needs. The institute conducts an extensive analysis of the regional airlines and aviation sector needs and responds to the findings in a proactive manner. It delivers courses that are highly responsive to specific stakeholders' needs and individual learner's career requirements and aspirations. A very wide range of courses with different levels is offered in the three main business streams, pilot, cabin crew and aircraft engineers. GAA offers a range of externally accredited courses, whereas all these courses are designed, delivered and assessed by the IATA team. Additionally, GAA offers an excellent range of internally accredited courses with international recognitions that are designed and approved by Aviation awarding bodies such as the EASA and BCAA. GAA includes the BCAA, EASA, IATA, different Civil Aviation Authorities and other stakeholders continually in the development of the programmes offered. This involvement is managed by seeking their suggestions and approvals to ensure that course contents meet the industry requirements and copes with the recent changes in the relevant sector.

Generally, courses are well structured and planned to meet the levels and standard defined by the awarding bodies and are complemented by course training manuals that are relevant and are provided usually by the individual aircraft manufacturers. Most courses are supported with relevant and engaging additional activities. Due to the nature of these courses, the awarding bodies and different aviation authorities audit each discipline periodically to ensure that international standards are maintained. Most learners interviewed are highly satisfied with the range and selection of courses offered by the institute, which meet their specific needs and aspiration.

All courses are resourced effectively. For example, in addition to classroom teaching, pilot training courses are conducted monitored and assessed using 'state of the art' aircraft type flight simulators. Equally cabin crew training is conducted in up to date 'mock up' and realistic aircraft passenger cabins. Trainers on aircraft engineering courses are facilitated

with computer based training classrooms and have access to the most modern precision termination tools. In addition, all courses are supported with relevant training materials, procedure manuals and study books, which are controlled by the specific airlines and aircraft manufacturers and/or accrediting bodies.

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

### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

Learners receive highly effective support during their enrolment on various courses at the GAA, which helps them achieve better outcomes. An informative induction session is conducted on the first day of a course by the trainers to share course expected outcomes and assessment methods, familiarise learners with the learning resources, attendance and punctuality policy, health, safety regulations and all relevant regulations, and introduce the training faculty and supporting staff to learners. GAA's management, administrative staff and trainers are approachable, cooperative and supportive. The institute adjust the training schedule to accommodate learners' odd working hours and stakeholders' requirements. Support staffs provide accommodation, transportation and IT services to learners during the course duration. Learners reported, in their feedback, that GAA's team members are supportive and helpful in cases of learners having inquiries or emergencies or needing personal or academic assistance.

GAA is highly flexible in delivering courses that suit the needs of stakeholders and maintain highly effective communication channels with stakeholders before the course to ensure that courses offered meets their specific requirements. Detailed and informative course outlines are sent to potential learners and their employers before the start of any course. Most learners are made aware of their progress and what they need to do to improve through instant individual constructive verbal and written feedback. By the end of a course, employers are provided with detailed and comprehensive learners' performance reports, while performance reports are provided to individuals upon their request. The majority of learners interviewed were aware of the level of skills and knowledge they are gaining as a result of attending a course in GAA. Learners and employers have access to informative and well-structured course information through the available course brochures, catalogues and on-line access to the institute's bilingual website. The institute, in addition to the course it is offering, works as an agent for some aviation institutes, where it facilitates for learners' registration on courses and programmes offered by a third party. The relationship between and the responsibilities of each party are made clear to the learners upon registration. However, the information published on the Academy's website and in the brochures is not clear. GAA publishes a monthly newsletter encompassing different reading topics.

The institute's learning environment is inspiring, pleasant. The premises comprises 39 special type classrooms that are utilised to meet the different needs of pilot, cabin crew and engineering training. Many of these classrooms have interactive smart boards, which allow innovative training methods to be used. Other classrooms have the latest computer-based training programmes that allow animated aircraft systems to be demonstrated in a realistic manner. Airbus A320/A330/A340 and Embraer aircraft flight simulators are extensively used throughout the pilots and engineering training programmes. In addition, the learners and trainers' lounge are furnished to be similar to boarding lounges installed in airports. Car-parking and praying facilities are available for all learners. Due to the nature of the aviation industry, after working hours training are conducted for cabin crew members and engineers to meet the needs of different stakeholders and learners alike. It also operates a 24-hour 7-day training facility for pilot courses. The institute has a training equipment maintenance division to ensure that all equipment are regularly maintained and there is no delay in the training schedule due to equipment malfunction.

## **Leadership and management**

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

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

GAA has appropriate vision and mission statements, which are focused towards providing quality training for the aviation industry and are shared with learners, trainers and other staff members. These are translated to strategic and annual business plans with specific KPIs, which are focused on improving the training quality and fulfilling stakeholders' specific needs. The internal quality assurance system of the institution is well documented and comprises all aspects of the provision in a very effective way. It encompasses a systematic approach to self-evaluation that is carried out by all divisions within the organisation on a yearly basis. The current organisational structure meets the aims and objectives of the institute. There are clear roles and responsibilities for each staff member within the organisation.

The institute has an effective recruitment procedure developed and implemented specifically for trainers. Well-qualified trainers with relevant vocational background and experiences are recruited, inducted and deployed effectively within their specialisation. Almost all trainers within GAA are provided frequently with development opportunities within their specialisation. The effectiveness of the training experience provided to learners is assured through a suitable lesson observations scheme. Most trainers are observed while conducting training sessions by their training managers and sometimes by the quality

manager or a representative from the BCAA and the auditors of the regulatory bodies. All this leads to trainers being provided with instructive feedback on how to improve further. Performance appraisal is conducted yearly for all staff members including the trainers, who are as a result provided with professional- and self-developments opportunities.

The institute has clearly stated course entry requirements, and useful measures are in place to evaluate learners' pre-course qualifications and attainments. Pre-entry qualifications and other requirements for each course are set according to the different awarding bodies' rules and regulations, which learners need to satisfy. Moreover, their backgrounds and validity of their licences are checked and verified prior to any course entry. Learners' achievements and progress on all courses are monitored well by the Academy's management. Records of learners' achievement are maintained and aggregated through an effective management information system (MIS). The management carries out useful analyses on learners' achievement and the findings are discussed regularly in management review meetings, which are held at least once every month. In addition, each training division carries out an analysis of all the examination answer papers and as a result, opportunities for improvement are identified and actioned. Examination papers are marked and verified by the concerned training manager. The quality assurance team verifies the implementation of this process by scrutinising a random sample of learners' examination answer papers during the internal annual audit process.

The Academy collects the views of learners at the end of each course. The outcomes are aggregated and analysed by the training manager and verified by the quality manager. The outcomes of these analyses are used to trigger improvement actions. The institute's marketing team seeks feedback of employers regularly, through different channels such as meetings, telephone conversations and emails.

Highly effective links are established with relevant stakeholder and the professional communities of the same industry, locally, regionally and internationally. For example, the institute works closely with the Bahrain Civil Aviation Authority, the awarding bodies such as EASA and IATA and other regional and international civil aviation authorities'. Representatives from these bodies visit GAA on regular basis to support the institute with the design, approval and review of its offerings.

GAA has effective health and safety policies and procedures in place. Emergency evacuation simulation is conducted at least twice a year and the Health and Safety committee conducts effective and frequent risk assessment to ensure the safety of the institute's premises. Health and safety issues are communicated to learners on the induction day of each course and all learners and new staff members are provided with a useful Health and Safety handbook. The institute has a very detailed and comprehensive Safety Management System manual to ensure that all GAA's aviation activities uphold the highest level of safety performance and meet national and international standards.

The institute performs a yearly self-evaluation and internal audit for all its divisions. This is carried out at the end of each year by the internal quality assurance team under the supervision of the management. The findings of the reviews are discussed with the top management and all the concerned division managers. The institute is regularly reviewed by the Bahrain Civil Aviation Authority and the awarding bodies and several civil aviation authorities. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted by the institute is informative with a good range of references. It critically analyses the states of the provision and identifies appropriate areas for development. The institute is yet to incorporate these into its improvement plans. The grades provided in the SEF by the institute for the purpose of this review underestimate some aspects of the provision.

## The provider's key strengths

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- Highly effective internal quality assurance system that ensures the enhancement of the quality of the provision
- Well qualified trainers who provide a wide range of relevant vocational examples and real life cases and good training methods
- Highly motivated learners who reflect critically and work effectively, both independently and collaboratively
- Almost all learners develop highly effective vocational skills and gain the qualification they aim for
- Learners receive very effective support and guidance, which help them achieve better outcomes
- A wide range of courses offered that are well planned and structured to meet different stakeholders needs and individual learners aspirations
- State of art learning resources that are updated to meet the international standards.

## Recommendations

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### **In order to improve, GAA should:**

- further enhance its approach for gathering and analysing employers' feedback
- ensure that information of offered courses on the website and brochures are clearly stated.