










هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority

Special Education Needs (SEN) Review Handbook

September 2025



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Introduction

The Education and Training Quality Authority (BQA) plays a key role in ensuring high quality education for all learners across the Kingdom of Bahrain. We currently review kindergartens, schools, both private and public, and post sixteen education, vocational and academic. We are now commencing the review process for Special Education Needs (SEN) Institutes. BQA has drafted a specific handbook for reviewing the performance of SEN Institutes. This Handbook, which includes criteria and indicators, aims to assess the quality of programmes and services provided by SEN Institutes. This handbook is considered an annex to the BQA review handbooks.

The Authority has developed specific criteria to determine the eligibility of these institutes for evaluation. They must be dedicated to learners with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and operate in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Additionally, they are required to hold an active license from a relevant licensing body, such as the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), or the National Health Regulatory Authority (NHRA).

Principles of Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria are based on a set of key principles as follows:

- The handbook aligns with the general directions and strategies of the kingdom of Bahrain, aiming to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal human rights of persons with special education needs and/or disabilities, and ensure that they have access to all services and provide equal opportunities alongside others.
- Pay due respect to Bahraini laws relating to children and persons with disabilities, such as the Child Law No. (37) of 2012, Law No. (74) of 2006 with respect to the Care, Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, and to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Promote transparency and accountability practices in special education institutes in the Kingdom of Bahrain regarding the quality of education provided to the relevant stakeholders.



01

A Safe and Protective Environment

Environments characterised by psychological security provide an appropriate and nurturing environment for learners, free from threats or fear that can hinder their emotional and social growth. The facilities and premises of special education institutes, which offer all necessary protective measures, ensure the health and safety of individuals, safeguarding them from physical harm. This is achieved through the appropriate selection of equipment, devices, and tools necessary for the institute's operations.

02

Multidimensional Diagnosis and Evaluation

Medical diagnosis is crucial for identifying the type and severity of the problem that an individual holds, which determines their need for special education programmes and services. Multidimensional psycho-educational evaluation is a core foundation for identifying the strengths and areas for improvement for SEN individuals. The results of diagnosis and evaluation are used in planning, implementing, and evaluating the education/training programmes provided to them, as well as in offering necessary counselling and guidance services for parents/guardians. Moreover, available information sources about learners are employed in preparing their educational programmes to meet their diverse individual needs.

03

Meeting Individual Needs

Learners with SEN have needs that vary significantly. While a group of individuals may share a similar special need, their educational needs can differ. Special education is based on the principle of "individualised education," which means modifying and adapting curricula and teaching methods to meet each learner's individual needs based on their abilities, challenges, and interests. The goal is to empower learners to reach their full potential.

Special Education Needs Review Handbook

The SEN Handbook sets out the evaluation requirements based on the approved criteria for evaluating the quality of special education institutes operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Moreover, it highlights strengths and areas for development, with the aim of providing recommendations that contribute to enhancing the quality of learners' experiences.

The SEN Handbook is organised as follows:

Aspects	Criteria	Indicators
Representing the main categories or areas into which the Handbook is divided. Typically, these areas are comprehensive and represent the major dimensions of work or evaluation.	These are the principles or general expectations that set out the quality or level within each Aspect. They provide guidance on what should be observed in each Aspect.	This is evidence that indicates the achievement of a specific Criterion. Indicators are measurable or observable, and they assist in assessing the extent to which the Criteria have been met.

Table 1: Structure of general Handbook for reviewing SEN

The Special Education Needs (SEN) Handbook consists of two main Aspects: **Aspect (1): "Quality of Learning & Teaching"** and **Aspect (2): "Quality of Leadership & Management"**, as indicated in Figure (1).

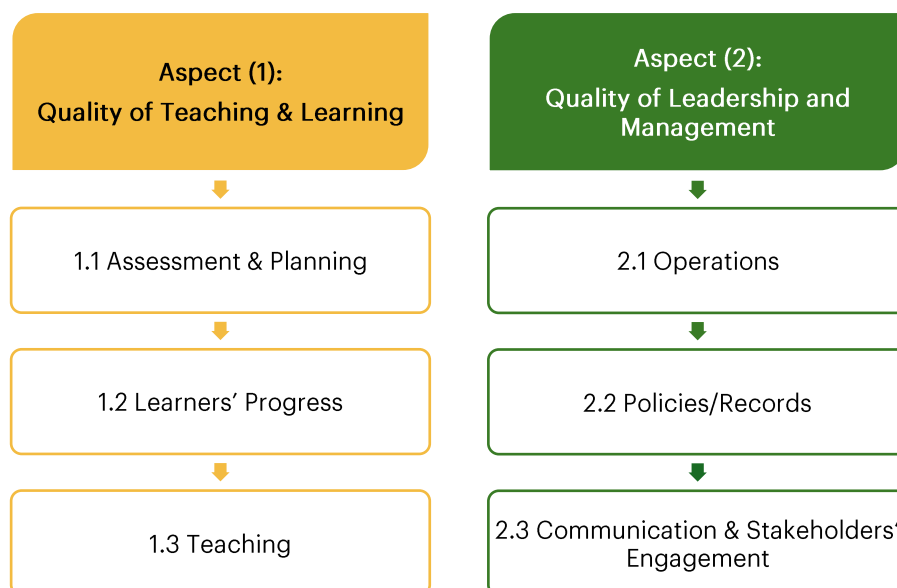


Figure 1: Review handbook aspects and criteria

Aspect 1:

Quality of Teaching & Learning



Aspect (1): Quality of Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning plays a crucial role in achieving the learners' personal and academic progress. It relies on essential standards that include assessment, planning, learner's progress, and teaching methods. Assessment and planning aim to regularly monitor learners' performance to develop customised educational plans that meet each learner's needs. While learner's progress focuses on measuring the extent to which learners achieve their individual learning goals, in line with their capabilities and specific needs, in addition, "Teaching" criterion relies on employing diverse and effective teaching methods that accommodate the varying abilities of learners. This approach contributes to creating an encouraging and supportive educational environment, helping all learners reach their maximum potential for progress.

The review of **Aspect (1): "Quality of Teaching and Learning"** is based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Indicator
1.1 Assessment & Planning	1.1.1 Assessment Process 1.1.2 Educational Support
1.2 Learners' Progress	1.2.1 Positive Behaviours 1.2.2 Individual Learning Programme(s)
1.3 Teaching	1.3.1 Educational Environment 1.3.2 Teaching

1 1. Assessment and Planning

This criterion evaluates the effectiveness of the assessment and planning processes, which are interrelated and form a core foundation for providing essential and supportive programmes for learners. Moreover, it focuses on how the results of the assessment process are utilised in effective planning.

1.1 1. Assessment Process

This indicator focuses on measuring the effectiveness of assessment processes with a view to identifying the current level of the learner by determining their strengths and areas for developmental (for instance cognitive skills, communication skills, emotional-social skills, motor skills, self-care skills, independence skills, transition skills) and academic improvement. Additionally, it examines the methods and approaches used by the institute to gather information about the learner, as well as the diversity and variety of approaches. It also considers the frequency and continuity of assessments (pre, during, and post teaching processes).

1.1 2. Educational Support

Individualised educational plans are essential components for planning the education that will be provided to learners. These plans include educational goals, along with all other relevant information related to delivering education. It is important that all types of plans include core main elements and are updated and reviewed periodically.

1 2. Learners' Progress

This criterion evaluates the effectiveness of the quality of the teaching and learning, which are central in the development of learners. The quality and range of experiences and outcomes that learners participate and engage with is central to educational development. Monitoring changes in learners' behaviour is a key indicator of their interaction with the educational environment. Furthermore, using teaching strategies and methods that consider the learners' characteristics contributes to their acquisition of learning based on their needs.

1.2 1. Positive Behaviours

Promoting positive engagement in learners with SEN is essential for their overall development and inclusion. By creating supportive and inclusive learning environments, teachers/specialists can nurture positive behaviours that enhance social interactions, and academic achievements, encouraging social skills, independence, and self-regulation, through tailored strategies helps learners with SEN build confidence and resilience, ultimately leading to more meaningful participation in their communities and successful transitions into adulthood.

1.2 2. Individual Learning Programme(s)

This indicator focuses on learners' progress in their individual learning programmes. Teachers/specialists evaluate learners upon their admission, draft individual educational plans, and implement them based on the identified needs, focusing on the learners' strengths and areas for development. Through regular and continuous assessment, teachers/specialists will modify individual educational plans to ensure learners achieve the best possible outcomes.

1 3. Teaching

This criterion evaluates the effectiveness of educational provision that meets the learners' needs, in addition to planning for learning, and employing teaching strategies and methods that suit the needs of learners by both engaging and motivating them. Effective management of learning time and activities directly related to learners' needs, ensure learners' development and participation, and provide them with opportunities for success.

1.3 1. Educational Environment

Educational environments play a significant role in providing an inclusive and nurturing experience for learners. The design includes the provision of comfortable indoor and outdoor spaces, equipped with furniture, materials, educational tools, and games that are appropriate for their various personal needs, ensuring that classrooms are arranged in a way that facilitates access and movement within them. Additionally, providing ramps and elevators (if available) to ensure easy movement between different floors, and equipping educational resources and facilities, such as libraries and play areas, with tools and materials that are appropriate for all learners. These combined measures help provide an educational environment that contributes to achieving equal opportunities among all learners and encourages positive interaction.

1.3 2. Teaching

Learners need a specialised education that meets their varied needs and aligns with the objectives of their individual educational plans. It is important to note that teachers/specialists' capacity to effectively plan the teaching and learning processes in terms of managing learning time efficiently, managing educational activities, and distributing opportunities equally among all learners, whether individually, in small groups. Teachers/specialists also employ various types of classroom activities in sessions that ensure developmental (for instance cognitive skills, communication skills, emotional-social skills, motor skills, self-care skills, independence skills, transition skills) and academic progress, supporting participation and providing learners with opportunities for success and a sense of achievement.

BQA staff will carry out several activities to evaluate the effectiveness of Aspect (1): "Quality of Teaching and Learning". These activities include, but are not limited to:

- **Observation of Learners:** This includes monitoring learners' interactions in various learning situations and activities, both indoors and outdoors, as well as observing them during play and conversations.
- **Evaluation of Educational Plans:** This involves analysing different types of educational plans, such as behaviour plans, individual educational plans, and individual learning plans.
- **Document and Procedure Analysis:** This involves a comprehensive review and analysis of the institute's records and documents.
- **Interview and Survey Data Analysis:** This includes conducting interviews and surveys with the institute's staff and parents/guardians.
- **Reviewing Samples of Learners' Work:** Whether these work activities are individual or group-based activities.

Examples of how to obtain data and evidence

- Reviewing individual educational plans.
- Lessons/sessions observation.
- Analysing the effectiveness and flexibility of lessons/sessions plans.
- Reviewing learners' work and their portfolios of achievements.
- Observing the educational environment.
- Interviewing teachers/specialists.
- Interviewing parents/guardians.
- Discussions with learners (if applicable).

Aspect 2:

Quality of Leadership and Management



Aspect (2): Quality of Leadership and Management

This aspect evaluates the crucial roles that institute's leadership and management play in providing an inclusive and supportive educational environment. Leaders apply strategies that ensure effective provision and engagement of learners, oversight professional development of staff and identify whole institutional principles and approaches. Effective leadership is critical in steering an organization toward its goals. It involves setting a clear vision, creating an inclusive and supportive culture, and driving continuous improvement. Leadership ensures that all team members are aligned with the organization's mission and objectives, fostering a sense of purpose and direction. Through strategic decision-making, effective communication, and the ability to adapt to change, leadership cultivates an environment where innovation thrives, and everyone is empowered to contribute to their fullest potential. This, in turn, enhances overall organizational performance and success.

The review of **Aspect (2): "Quality of Leadership and Management"** is based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Indicator
2.1 Leadership	2.1.1 Operations 2.1.2 Providing Well-being and Care
2.2 Policies/Records	2.2.1 Documents and Records 2.2.2 Procedures
2.3 Communication & Stakeholders Engagement	2.3.1 Communication with Stakeholders 2.3.2 Stakeholders Engagement

2 1. Leadership

This criterion evaluates the impact of leadership, which is a key element in the success of institutes. Effective management plays an active role in achieving the institute's goals through the quality of its daily operations and the activation of internal policies and procedures to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, effective leadership includes providing health, physical, social, psychological, care for both learners and staff.

2.1 1. Operations

This indicator evaluates the leadership's capacity to create a clear vision that reflects its primary purpose and core values. This information helps determine the institute's strategic direction and provides a reference framework for decision-making.

The indicator also evaluates the institute's ability to develop an operational plan comprising the necessary elements, and including key procedures and subsequent steps, and to implement, educational curriculums and programmes (whether prepared internally

or externally), These programmes are regularly evaluated and updated internally to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness in addition to providing various essential and supportive services to meet the needs of learners. Leadership regularly monitors employee performance, identifies areas for development, provides necessary support, and ensures continuous professional training aligned with the institute's development goals.

Moreover, the allocation of human and physical resources is evaluated to ensure the efficient and effective operation of daily activities, enhancing the overall educational experience.

2.1 2. Providing Well-being and Care

This indicator evaluates capacity to implement comprehensive health and safety policies aimed at ensuring a safe and healthy environment for all learners and staff. These policies include preventive measures and emergency response procedures to protect learners and staff from potential hazards.

The management also focuses on providing appropriate health, physical, social, and psychological care for both learners and staff. Physical care includes providing an educational environment equipped with the latest safety measures for psychological care, the management provides necessary psychological support through social support and counselling programmes.

2 2. Policies/Records

This criterion evaluates the institute's capacity to maintain documents and records. Records include attendance, learner assessments, individual plans, and records of behavioural, developmental and academic progress. These records contribute to providing appropriate support and continuous follow-up for each learner, ensuring the achievement of behavioural, developmental (for instance cognitive skills, communication skills, emotional-social skills, motor skills, self-care skills, independence skills, transition skills) and educational goals.

The institute's capacity to improve, review, update, and monitor the implementation of comprehensive policies to meet learners' needs is demonstrated.

2.2 1. Documents and Records

This indicator evaluates the process of maintaining learners' portfolios, which is essential for ensuring the accuracy of documents. This also includes the regular updating of learner's files to include all personal information, assessments, and other important documents.

Furthermore, the indicator evaluates the availability, accuracy, and completeness of the documents and records maintained by the institute, such as learner attendance records, behavioural plans (if any) and educational plans, and records of their work and progress.

The availability and accuracy of these documents are crucial for ensuring the quality of the teaching process and providing appropriate support to learners, as they contribute to providing a comprehensive view of learners' progress and performance, enabling teachers/specialists to make informed decisions to improve the teaching process and effectively meet learners' needs.

This indicator evaluates the efficiency of maintaining and periodically updating employee records to ensure the inclusion of all personal information, attendance records, academic qualifications, performance evaluation documents, as well as training and professional development certificates.

2.2 2. Procedures

This indicator evaluates the institute's relevant policies and procedures. This includes policies related to administrative, organisational and educational aspects that serve as a reference framework for the institute's operations, ensuring adherence to its internal policies.

These policies and procedures are important tools for maintaining the institute's quality performance, as they clarify the various functions and responsibilities of individual or department. This helps avoid overlaps and conflicts in roles. Regular review of these policies allows the institute to adapt to emerging changes and challenges in the educational environment.

2 3. Communication and Stakeholders Engagement

This criterion evaluates the roles played by the institute leadership in communicating and engaging with stakeholders, such as parents/guardians, licensing bodies, teachers/specialists, and the local community. These efforts contribute to enhancing comprehensive and integrated support for learners, and ensuring their social, psychological, and educational needs are met.

The institute has effective strategies to build bridges of open and continuous communication with all stakeholders. This enhances their understanding and cooperation in providing appropriate support for learners. Moreover, stakeholder engagement contributes to achieving the best learning outcomes and promoting the effective and sustainable involvement of learners with their community.

2.3 1. Communication with Stakeholders

Maintaining continuous communication with stakeholders, including parents/guardians, learners, and licensing bodies, is crucial for enhancing cooperation and participation. By implementing feedback mechanisms and providing regular updates, the institute ensures that all stakeholders' views are recognised and valued. This advanced communication

approach helps enhance the educational experience for all stakeholders, as well as building trust.

2.3 2. Stakeholders Engagement

Engaging parents/guardians in organising activities and participating in the learning process at all stages is crucial for fostering a collaborative educational environment. Their active participation supports learners, making them feel part of the educational process, which enhances their support and engagement.

Moreover, this engagement strengthens community bonds, fostering a sense of belonging between families and the institute. Consequently, these joint efforts help improve the learners' overall educational experience and enhance their learning outcomes.

BQA staff will carry out several activities to evaluate the effectiveness of Aspect (2): "Quality of Leadership and Management". These activities include, but are not limited to:

- **Leadership Awareness:** The purpose is to evaluate leaders' understanding of self-evaluation mechanisms and their effectiveness in evaluating the current situation and setting priorities. It includes analysing their ability to make strategic decisions and promote a culture of cooperation and inclusivity. Furthermore, it addresses leaders' awareness of the challenges encountered by learners and the effectiveness of the adopted methods to improve the quality of education and services provided.
- **Plan Analysis:** This involves analysing the institute's action plans to evaluate their effectiveness in improving the quality of education and providing a comprehensive learning environment. It also helps identify opportunities and challenges that can be leveraged to enhance institutional performance and achieve desired goals. Additionally, it aims to evaluate the comprehensiveness and accuracy of action plans in focusing on improvement priorities.
- **Resource Evaluation:** This includes ensuring the availability, appropriateness, and effectiveness of human and physical resources.
- **Interviews, Surveys, and Document Analysis:** This involves analysing interviews and surveys with the institute's staff and partners and reviewing performance-related documents.

Examples of how to obtain data and evidence

- The institute's vision.
- Institute's action plans, such as the operational plan and others.
- Administrative, organisational, and educational policies.
- learners' files and portfolios.
- Staff files.

- The institute's documents, records, and portfolios, such as learner attendance records, discipline tracking, and progress records.
- Human and physical resources.
- A safe, healthy, and well-equipped educational environment with necessary furniture, tools, and educational materials.
- Educational programmes (whether prepared internally or externally).
- Staff performance evaluation.
- Training and professional development.
- Diverse essential and supportive services.
- Effectiveness of stakeholders' communication and engagement.
- Interviewing administrative staff.
- Interviewing parents/guardians.

Review Guidelines

Review guidelines set out the processes and methods used by the BQA staff to evaluate the effectiveness of an institute's performance.

The approach to reviews

Regular and continuous self-evaluation is crucial for the development and improvement of an institution's performance. This key principle is central to the review process approach. Institutes are required to document the outcomes of their self-evaluation in the BQA Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), identifying strengths and areas for improvement based on the same criteria outlined in the SEN Handbook used by reviewers to assess quality across key aspects.

Reviewers evaluate the institute's quality of provision through carrying out a set of activities, such as lessons/sessions observation, conduct of interviews and surveys, participation in discussions, document scrutiny, and reviewing learners' work. This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough assessment of the institute's overall performance, by BQA reviewers.

Based on the evidence gathered during the review process, reviewers formulate overall recommendations regarding the institute's provision. Feedback to the institute's management is an integral part of the review process, ensuring that staff are fully informed about how the report is drawn up.



Review stages and procedures

The review process includes quality assurance procedures throughout its different stages. The review process has three key stages as follows:

Stage (1): Pre-review procedures

- The BQA notifies the institute of the dates of the review and the name of the Lead Reviewer two weeks before the review date.
- The institute will be provided with a link to Parent/Guardian Questionnaire to send to them.
- The institution sends the completed SEF within the deadline assigned to the concerned directorate at BQA, with the following documents:
 - the institute's staff deployment list
 - the institute's action plans 'if any,' such as operational plans.
 - the institute's weekly timetable, highlighting essential and support service sessions and activities learners do throughout the day.
- The Lead Reviewer contacts the institution's leadership, by telephone to briefly discuss review related matters a week before the review week.
- The Lead Reviewer analyses institute's submitted SEF, Parent/Guardian Questionnaire, and any other available institute documents provided by the SEN institute.

Stage (2): During the review procedures

- The on-site review will normally last for two days, in which reviewers will:
 - observe the institute's activities.
 - scrutinise learners' portfolios and other types of work to monitor their progress.
 - review any additional documents that are related to the review aspects.
 - hold discussions with learners, staff and parents/guardians (if applicable).
 - engage in conversations with learners, inside and outside of classrooms.
 - ensure that resources are available and appropriate and are effectively deployed.
 - provide the institute management with final feedback of the review recommendations.
- Reviewers are committed to the highest professional standards.

It is worth noting that the reviewers will observe essential and support lessons/ sessions to evaluate their effectiveness by analysing the level of learner participation and interaction in lessons, as well as programme and service planning, educational environment arrangements, assessment and teaching methods. Evaluate the level and effectiveness of feedback provided to learners.

Stage (3): Post review procedures

- The BQA sends a copy of the draft report within a maximum period of 4 weeks from the review date.
- The institute scrutinises the draft report for factual accuracy and responds to it within five working days
- All institutes are required to submit their action plans - to implement any given recommendations - within 4 weeks from receiving the review report.



Reviewers Code of Conduct (ASPIRE)

To uphold the highest professional standards among reviewers and ensure they conduct reviews with integrity, impartiality and respect for all stakeholders. Key values are:

- **Accountability:** Take full responsibility for actions and decisions, ensuring transparency and adherence to ethical standards.
- **Sensitivity:** Demonstrate the ability to recognise practical situations and make appropriate decisions based on the inclusive understanding of work aspects.
- **Professionalism:** Acting with a high level of competence and skill during the review and adhering to applicable ethical and professional standards. Professionalism reflects behaviours and attitudes that enhance quality.
- **Integrity:** Uphold the highest ethical standards, acting with honesty, transparency, and fairness in all aspects of review work.

- **Respect:** Treat all individuals with dignity and respect, valuing their perspectives and contributions to the special education institute community.
- **Excellence:** Strive for excellence in all aspects of review conduct, providing comprehensive, insightful, and actionable feedback to institutes.

All reviewers must commit to upholding the highest standards of professional conduct and adhering to the principles outlined in this code of conduct. By consistently demonstrating ASPIRE key principles, reviewers can contribute to implementing a fair and effective SEN review system that safeguards the interests of all stakeholders, especially the learners. In case an institute desires to appeal against the code of conduct, it must follow the instructions available for this purpose on the BQA official website.

Review Outcomes

The review report includes the institute's strengths and any areas for improvement.

Disruption/incompletion of the review process

If the review process is disrupted for any exceptional circumstances such as natural disasters or epidemics, cases will be considered in accordance with the BQA policies and procedures.



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