



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

Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Oasis Training Centre
Abu Sayba
Manama – Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 21-23 November 2017

VO123-C3-R075

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Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over three days by a team of four 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 the materials provided by the provider and met with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

It is worth mentioning that this is the first review for this Centre. This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Grading scale

Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of programmes	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of support and guidance	Satisfactory (3)
Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate (4)
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory (3)
Overall effectiveness	Satisfactory (3)

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

The provision of Oasis Training Centre (OTC) is satisfactory overall. Although learners' achievement, quality of training and assessment, programmes, and support and guidance are satisfactory, leadership and management fail to meet the required standards.

Learners acquire appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to their courses, though the added value for a minority of them is minimal. The majority of learners enrolled in the local courses, which comprise around 80% of the total enrolment, achieve their course objectives and reflect an adequate standard, making sufficient progress considering their prior attainment. The local courses are bespoke, designed and developed to meet the specific needs of learners and stakeholders. They are clearly structured and planned with the exception of the Advance Leadership Programmes where the assessment methods are not clear nor specifically stated in the course outlines. Courses are delivered by knowledgeable and experienced trainers who deploy a range of training methods which succeed in engaging and motivating learners effectively. Though trainers check learners' understanding frequently during sessions, the quality of assessment methods varies between courses. Records on learners' achievement are not maintained in a significant minority of courses. Although useful verbal feedback is provided to learners during the learning sessions, in most courses they are not provided with written feedback on their work and how to improve further. Learners at OTC receive adequate support and guidance. Although the Centre has detailed policies and procedures, they are not fully implemented so do not enable learners to reach their full potential. The learning environment is fit for purpose and equipped with the essential learning aids and facilities.

A three year strategic plan has recently been developed, and an operational plan for the year 2017-2018 is in place and is sufficiently focused on improving the provision. However, it is not informed by the outcomes of a regular self-evaluation process as this process is only recently being implemented. Although quality trainers are recruited and their performance is sufficiently monitored, learners' achievement is not sufficiently monitored in the Advance Leadership Programmes which make a significant minority of the total enrolment, where relevant data is not maintained.

Capacity to improve

How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

OTC has sufficient and appropriate human and physical resources to enable improvements to be carried out. Senior management are highly qualified and have wide relevant experience. Trainers are meticulously selected. During the past year, the Centre carried out some improvement to the provision, which includes development of detailed and comprehensive policies and procedures although these are not yet fully implemented. An education and quality assurance manager has recently been recruited on a full-time basis and is working on implementing the policies and procedures, and training staff on the use of the various templates. OTC is in the process of recruiting one more staff member, for business development. To expand the range of the courses offered the Centre received approval from The Institute of Risk Management (IRM) (UK) as a licensed training provider of the Fundamentals of Risk Management course (FoRM). Accordingly, two trainers are nominated to attend training with IRM. Also, the Centre is planning to introduce a business continuity course through the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) UK; this is already presented for the approval of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. Though the self-evaluation process is still in the early stages, the current operational plan is appropriate and focuses on improving the provision. Adequate quality assurance arrangements are in place and repeat business during 2017 is high. Nevertheless, learners' achievement is not sufficiently monitored in the Advance Leadership Programmes which constitute a significant minority of the total enrolment (44%), as achievement data is not maintained.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

Learners gain adequate knowledge and develop useful vocational and soft skills relevant to their learning in the various fields, including leadership and management. This is evident from learners' assessment results, their contributions, and levels of understanding in the observed sessions. The vast majority of learners and stakeholders interviewed expressed their high satisfaction with the outcomes of the training provided and find it beneficial in improving their performance in the workplace. However, the added value for a minority of learners is minimal, as shown by their post-course assessment results and the evaluation of their own performance through the end-of-course feedback and evaluation. Learners'

performance and the skills development are appropriately measured using a range of formative and summative assessment tools. The local courses, which constitute 80% of the total enrolment, include short soft skills courses and long Advanced Leadership Programmes. These long programmes comprise several short modules that are customised to stakeholders' specific needs and requirements. The majority of learners enrolled in the local courses complete the course requirements and successfully achieve the course objectives. The standard of learners' work in these courses reflects an adequate level of performance and progress throughout the course. Moreover, the comparison between the pre- and post-course assessments in the soft skills courses reveals that the vast majority of learners make sufficient progress relative to their prior attainment. The remaining proportion of learners are enrolled in the externally accredited courses that include the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) English qualifications and the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) level 3 award and certificate. These courses are not yet completed and learners are in the process of submitting their first assignments and completing the required assessments.

The vast majority of learners are attentive and demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. However, only a minority of them reflect adequately on their level of understanding through questioning their trainers and sharing relevant examples. Although the 'Individual Learning Plan' form provides learners with an opportunity to reflect on their learning, it is implemented only in a few courses and learners do not critically identify their learning goals or set for themselves plans for improvement. From the sessions observed and scrutiny of learners' work, the majority of learners are able to work well both independently and collaboratively within teams during the in-class activities.

OTC has a relevant policy on attendance and punctuality, which is shared with learners and stakeholders prior to the start of a course. Attendance is always recorded and the vast majority of learners attend on a regular basis. Nonetheless, punctuality is not recorded and there are a few cases of learners arriving late during the observed sessions.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

OTC trainers are qualified, knowledgeable and experienced in the courses they deliver. This is evident from their thorough explanations which are supported with real-life cases and vocational examples. They use appropriate lesson plans that indicate the lesson's objectives, skills and knowledge learning outcomes, time allocation and class work and assessment

tasks. These plans are mostly prepared based on learners' and stakeholders' needs, which are identified through preliminary interviews and learners' skills scans which are conducted prior to the course. However, lesson plans are not always updated with the outcomes of learners' continuous assessment. The vast majority of the observed sessions were well managed, usually starting on time with introductory activities and the session's objectives are always shared with learners, who are provided with clear instructions. Trainers deploy a range of training methods which succeed in engaging and motivating learners effectively. These include open discussion, role plays, questions and answers, and effective pair and group activities. During sessions, trainers check learners' understanding through questioning techniques, pair and group class activities, and end of day assessment. Throughout the courses, appropriate formative and summative assessments are conducted that are corrected and marked accurately. However, the quality of assessments varies between the courses. Although clear rubrics are applied for evaluating learners' work in the externally accredited courses, this is not the case with the local courses. Verification and moderation processes have recently been implemented for the externally accredited courses, but local courses are not verified.

Records of learners' achievement are maintained adequately in the majority of courses and mainly include learners' scores in the pre- and post-course assessments. However, in a significant minority of courses, particularly in the Advance Leadership Programmes, they are not maintained. Although instant verbal feedback is provided to learners on their work during sessions, detailed written feedback on learners' work detailing how and where they can improve further is not provided in most of the courses. Trainers address individual learners' needs sufficiently during sessions through providing more clarification and repeated explanations. They also stimulate critical thinking and life-long learning amongst learners through questioning techniques and challenging real-life cases and scenarios. A range of learning resources and materials is used effectively to promote learning, including power point presentations, data show, flip charts, handouts and course booklets.

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

OTC offers a wide range of locally designed and developed soft skills and English for Specific Purposes courses for very niche markets such as the Oil & Gas Industry, Medical, Legal, Insurance and Retail. The Centre, in collaboration with a local partner, provides Advanced Leadership Training Programmes tailored for different industries. These are in addition to externally accredited courses such as LCCI English for Business, ILM qualifications in Leadership and Management, Chartered Institute of Insurance (CII) (UK),

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The Centre maintains close links with clients and stakeholders through fit for purpose communication channels and utilises the outcomes of these links to cater effectively to the organisations' training needs. A detailed training needs analysis is completed to assess learners' performance within their jobs and the specifics are shared with the respective stakeholders along with the recommended training solutions. By implementing a structured design, review and modification process, bespoke soft-skills courses are developed and customised effectively to meet relevant industry needs. OTC also offers courses for university graduates and diploma holders to scale up their skills and enable them to secure jobs.

Courses are clearly structured and planned, with detailed course outlines that specify the objectives/learning outcomes, teaching methodology, activities and relevant formal and informal formative and summative assessments. However, in the Advanced Leadership Programmes the assessment methods are not clearly specified. For the externally accredited courses, the respective awarding body's stipulations regarding course structure, teaching and assessment methods are implemented as recommended. Course manuals are provided to learners to inform them about the course aims, scheme of work and other relevant details. The different soft skills courses are supported with very relevant resources such as well-designed power point presentations, videos and charts. Courses are not supported with extra-curricular activities, though the Centre organises periodic Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives in open forums for their learners as well as for any professionals in related fields. The purpose of these programmes is to support learners in their career progression within different industries. OTC stipulates entry and access prerequisites for the local courses and uses fit for purpose methods such as a preliminary interview or placement test to evaluate a learner's prior attainment. For the externally accredited courses, awarding body placement guidelines are clearly implemented.

How well are learners supported and guided?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

Learners at OTC receive adequate support and guidance throughout their learning experience. At the start of a training course they are provided with an induction session to familiarise them with the key aspects related to their learning. These include detailed information on the course objectives and content, attendance and punctuality policy, health and safety arrangements, and support and guidance procedures. Learners also receive a detailed handbook and an induction checklist to ensure that they have covered the necessary requirements prior to course commencement. Learners enrolled in the externally accredited courses, particularly the ILM qualifications, are offered catch-up sessions to complete the

required learning hours and have access to additional materials to aid them with their assignments. They also receive a useful brief on assignment preparation and feedback on their draft submission. Though the Centre has relevant and inclusive support policies that cover all categories of learners, including learners with special needs, these are not fully and consistently implemented to enable learners to reach their full potential.

Learners and stakeholders have access to information about the courses offered through the Centre's informative website, brochures and social media platforms. During the consultation and course customisation process, potential learners and stakeholders receive well-informed advice and guidance on course selection. The arrangements for delivery and scheduling of courses are highly flexible to suit the needs of learners and stakeholders in terms of preferred date, times and venue. The registration process ensures that learners with special needs who require particular arrangements are identified at the early stages, prior to their enrolment. The Centre maintains adequate communication with its stakeholders to inform them about the course in general by sharing the outcomes of learners' end-of-course evaluation and feedback. However, they are not informed about individual learners' performance throughout the course.

The vast majority of the courses are carried out in hospitality venues or at employers' work premises. The Centre's learning environment and chosen venues for training are fit-for-purpose and learners have access to essential learning aids and facilities. A detailed checklist is used to ensure that external venues meet the required health and safety standards. The Centre itself has three classrooms and a small library that contains a range of books and learning references for the use of learners and trainers.

Leadership, management and governance

How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Grade: Inadequate (4)

Although the majority of the leadership and management aspects meet the standards, and there are few pockets of good practice, learners' achievement in a significant minority of the courses is insufficiently monitored and relevant data is not maintained.

OTC has clear vision and mission statements which are shared with staff and learners. The mission statement is focused on learners' achievement. Although a three-year strategic plan has only recently been developed, an operational plan is in place for the year 2017-2018 which sets specific actions for each strategic objective, clear accountabilities, and time scales.

The strategic objectives are relevant to improving programmes to better develop learners' knowledge and skills, development of trainers and staff, and expanding the range of programmes offered. Progress of actions is sufficiently monitored. However, the self-evaluation process is recent and not yet fully implemented, thus is not sufficiently used to inform strategic planning. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) completed in preparation for this review is fairly informative, though it overestimates the overall performance of the Centre in terms of the grades provided. The current organisation structure is fit for purpose, considering the number of enrolments and types of courses provided. OTC has sufficient and appropriate human resources. A full time education and quality assurance manager has recently been recruited (in August 2017) who handles quality assurance aspects and carries out relevant training to staff. Before August she was working with the Centre on a part-time basis. Roles and responsibilities are identified in appropriate job descriptions.

Adequate quality assurance arrangements are in place and detailed policies and procedures have been developed since January 2017, though they are not fully implemented. Learners' prior attainment is assessed well in the majority of the courses and the outcomes are sufficiently utilised to inform lesson planning. Internal verification has been implemented in the recently conducted ILM courses, though the OTC local courses are not verified. Although learners' achievement is sufficiently monitored in the majority of courses, it is not sufficiently monitored in the Advance Leadership Programmes which constitutes a significant minority of the total enrolment (44%). These courses are conducted by a local training partner where achievement data is not maintained.

Qualified trainers are recruited, inducted and deployed effectively. Their performance is sufficiently monitored through class observations conducted by the managing director and the education and quality assurance manager. Trainers are provided with feedback on areas needing development, to ensure continuous improvement of training. Performance appraisal is in place and staff are provided with in-house training opportunities relevant to their work assignment. Learners' feedback about the provision is regularly gathered, aggregated and analysed. Where needed, this is utilised for improvement. Close links are maintained with stakeholders and relevant sections of the community. Most of the local courses are customised to meet stakeholders' specific needs. Views and feedback of stakeholders are sufficiently gathered and is used alongside the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities which are carried out with relevant professional organisations such as Bahrain Society for Training and Development (BSTD), Bahrain Chamber of Commerce, and Bahrain Business Women Society.

OTC has effective policies and procedures to ensure a safe, secure and healthy learning environment for learners and staff. Learners are provided with instructions at the start of their courses. Training locations, including hospitality venues and employers' premises, are always checked to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment.

The provider's key strengths

- Qualified and experienced trainers are recruited; they deploy a range of training methods which succeed in engaging and motivating learners effectively.
- Bespoke local courses are developed to meet specific needs of learners and stakeholders.
- There are well-established links with stakeholders.

Recommendations

In order to improve, OTC should:

- ensure that learners further develop skills and knowledge relevant to their course levels and requirements and make sufficient progress from their starting points
- further improve assessment methods in all courses to be more rigorous
- ensure that learners and stakeholders are informed of learners' achievement and how to improve further
- improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that policies and procedure are fully implemented and followed-up
 - ensuring that the self-evaluation process is regular and the outcomes are utilised to inform improvement and strategic planning
 - ensuring that achievement data is maintained in all courses, aggregated and analysed, and utilised to inform decision making.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Oasis Training Centre (OTC) was established in February 2015 and is licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The Centre offers locally designed courses in management and soft skills and English for specific purpose, these courses being customised to meet the specific needs of learners and stakeholders. There are also externally accredited courses such as London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Business English, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) (UK), and Chartered Institute of Insurance (CII) (UK) courses.

OTC operates from a single Centre located in Abu Sayba. The Centre is managed by a managing director who is the owner; she also carries out training and some quality assurance activities such as class observations. The Centre employs an education and quality assurance manager, two business development staff, and one administration staff. All staff are recruited on a full-time basis. In addition to a full time English and lead teacher, the Centre has a pool of qualified and experienced local and international trainers who are utilised as and when needed. All staff report to the education and quality assurance manager, who reports to the managing director.

OTC has enrolled 381 learners since it opened, 6 in 2015 and 375 in 2017 up to the date of this review. 44% of the learners are enrolled in local attendance certificate courses conducted by a training partner, 36% are enrolled in other local attendance and completion certificate courses, and 20% are enrolled in externally accredited courses (ILM and LCCI).